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## POLICE: Man found dead on Bloomfield Township beach died of K2 overdose; legislators continue push to ban substance

Tuesday, May 29, 2012 4:21 PM EDT

By DAVE PHILLIPS

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The 18-year-old Bloomfield Township man who died on a private beach this weekend is believed to have died "as a direct result" of smoking K2, police said Tuesday.

Oliver Satchel Smith was found dead on a beach in the area of Walnut Lake Road and Franklin Road around 11:20 a.m. Saturday. He was unresponsive and was pronounced dead at the scene.

Smith's body was found by a Bloomfield Township resident who was fishing on Wing Lake.

The cause of death has been ruled accidental by the Oakland County Medical Examiner's Office. The case is still under investigation pending toxicology test results

"Mr. Smith died of an apparent drug overdose," states a press release from the Bloomfield Township Police Department.

"Information gathered at the scene led investigators to believe that Mr. Smith died as a direct result of smoking herbal incense which is more commonly referred to as K2 or Spice."

Oakland County Chief Medical Examiner Ljubisa Dragovic said toxicology results should be complete "within a matter of weeks."

"There is no way for us to give you a direct answer now (about what types of drugs were involved in Smith's death) before the toxicological results are complete, but there is no question this is a death from drug abuse," Dragovic said.

Foul play is not suspected, police said.

The death comes amid legal wrangling over a state law that could ban the substance in any form — even if manufacturers make slight changes to the chemical compound.

"It's an ongoing problem," State Rep. Brad Jacobsen, R-Oxford said.

"Unfortunately, with our society today, so many young adults are looking for a quick escape. This is an extremely hazardous material and it's readily available."

Jacobsen said the bill was passed out of a judiciary committee in the House of Representatives on March 15. Legislators are still attempting to determine "which agency or department would have oversight as to making the ruling as to which products would be considered harmful, dangerous products to be taken off the market," Jacobsen said.

"Originally it was the state pharmaceutical board but there were questions about the legality of having them do that process."

A bill was passed in 2010 banning K2, but manufacturers found a loophole in the bill and slightly altered the mixture in order to bypass the law.

"We're trying to craft a bill that would cover all the variations or give a department oversight so we don't have to continually come up with a new piece of legislation every time they reformulate the products," Jacobsen said.

"We're working to get it through, but trying to do it the right way isn't always the most expedient."

Jacobsen was not sure when the bill might take effect. Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard hopes it's sooner rather than later.

"I'm pushing both on the state and on the federal side," he said, adding that it's important to "have a process in place that they can move quickly if these corrupt-minded individuals that seek only profit and know they're causing problems change one minor ingredient in an attempt to (bypass) the law."

Bouchard was not sure how many people in Oakland County may have died as a result of smoking the substance, but he said "a number of people" have been hospitalized.

He hopes the bill passes before summer recess.

"There's always a lag," he said. "Criminal enforcement penalties have to be set some time in the future (to allow people to adjust to the law). We would like to get that done before they recess and start that ticking clock because literally it's months away from when they pass it."

Until then, Bouchard encourages consumers to avoid shopping at businesses that sell the substance.

"We encourage people to contact their legislators to encourage them to get this done before summer recess," he said.

"We're going to be very vigilant on all three of those fronts: Lansing, Washington and consumer activism."

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